'THE MUSICAL PILGRIM'

Edited by Dr. Arthur Somervell

Mozart's String Quartets

by Thomas F. Dunhill

Book I

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

'THE MUSICAL PILGRIM'

General Editor *Dr. Arthur Somervell*

MOZART'S STRING QUARTETS

BY

THOMAS F. DUNHILL

BOOK I

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON: HUMPHREY MILFORD
1927

Digitized by Google

MT
145
M7
D9
v. 1

Printed in Great Britain

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS

BOOK I

INTRODUCTION . . . 5

I. THE EARLY STRING QUARTETS . . 11

II. THE SIX STRING QUARTETS DEDICATED TO HAYDN . . . 26

Quartet in G (K. 387) . . 28

Quartet in D minor (K. 421) . 35

Quartet in E flat (K. 428) . . 43

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

BOOK I

Introduction

MOZART, it is reported, was described by Hans von Bülow, fifty years ago or so, as a young composer with a great future before him. Von Bülow was something of a musical seer as well as a humorist, and his prophecy has been abundantly fulfilled.

Unlike most young composers, Mozart has retained his youth and his appeal to youth. In these days, when we find Beethoven's chamber works most unjustly and ridiculously attacked for their 'pretentious emptiness' and worse, it is at least comforting to find a general consensus of opinion that the compositions of his immediate predecessor are possessed of an unassailable beauty. Mozart, happily, seems to appeal to the devotees of all schools of musical thought. The classically minded have never lost him: the ultra-modernists, led into the way of truth by Sir Thomas Beecham and other disciples, have rediscovered him and now hold the faith with astonishing unity of spirit. Changes of fashion, which are very frequent in other directions, seem powerless to dethrone the beloved Mozart from the affections of either our Tories or our Bolsheviks.

How much of this devotion is due to the fact that there is a strong reaction against music which is heavily charged with romanticism it is difficult to say. There is a certain impersonal quality in the pre-Beethoven classics which appeals to almost every type of musical mind. We may dwell upon the different characteristics of Haydn and Mozart. We may recog-

Digitized by Google

nize that, though both composers were high-spirited, where Haydn was exuberant Mozart was volatile, where Haydn was humorous in a blunt or obvious way Mozart was witty in a subtle way, and so on. But the similarities are far greater than the differences. The musical outlook of these two great masters is far more alike than that of any two great masters of the present day. It is perhaps because Mozart gives us the most perfect expression of the outlook of his time that we treasure his music so highly.

E. J. Dent, in his admirable treatise on Mozart's operas,[1] makes a very interesting general observation. 'When we hear the music of a composer whose mode of expression is so remote from our own as is Mozart's,' he says, 'we inevitably tend to fasten on the externals of his music in the belief that they are his most vital characteristics.' Further, he adds that 'most of those features of Mozart's music which we are apt to consider so typically Mozartian are not Mozartian in the least, but are simply the common stock-in-trade of all the music-makers of the day'.

This is very true. If we are searching for individuality in music we shall find the period of Haydn and Mozart a hunting-ground upon which we are likely to stumble. We should certainly remember that individuality of style means far more to us than it meant to musicians of Mozart's day.

It is not until the older classical type of music was superseded by the romantic that much importance was attached to the personality of a composer. We are apt to value a piece of music for what we regard as its exceptional, its unique qualities—for its freedom in self-expression. But in the eighteenth century the

[1] E. J. Dent, *Mozart's Operas*, Chatto & Windus.

Digitized by Google

great composers were looked upon as the guardians of traditions. They accepted the trust, and respected, even reverenced, the limitations of art as then defined. They were, indeed, proud to conform to a standard of aesthetic morality that we moderns neither recognize nor understand. It was Beethoven, the conscious revolutionary in music, who cast these ideas to the winds and first made a virtue of individuality. And so a new school of thought arose which magnified the personal, the egoistic, and dominating element, and thereby lost a good deal of the purity and serenity which made the work of the older masters so general and universal.

Of recent years the aggrandizement of personality has been so dominating and so shameless that it is not surprising to find people returning with ever-increasing affection to the work of a composer who, as Ernest Newman has said, 'never wrote a page that does not touch the spiritual ear with a caress'. Mozart's music is 'of humanity yet above humanity: it is the pure soul of man purged of all the grossness of his clay'.

Such a composer as this was in his true element in chamber music. The spirituality that was in him did not demand big forces for its expression. The less mechanism he employed, the more he was able to touch us. Therefore in the string quartet—the most intimate and expressive of combinations, where a strong volume of sound is impossible and the purity of the musical idea is everything—he was most truly great.

Mozart wrote twenty-three string quartets, not counting the three Divertimenti or the Serenade ('Kleine Nachtmusik'), which were probably intended for string orchestra, or the Adagio and Fugue, dealt with in the second part of this book. Only about six

Digitized by Google

of these works are at all familiar to the public—five of the set dedicated to Haydn and the isolated example in D major written in 1786. In this matter it cannot be urged that popular opinion has gone astray, for these well-known examples are unquestionably Mozart's greatest masterpieces in this field. At the same time the student will find the earliest quartets, written between 1770 and 1773, of great interest in view of the hints they give of what was to come, and no apology is needed for the consideration which is bestowed upon such little-known works in these pages. It is even more desirable that his attention should be directed to the three unfamiliar quartets of Mozart's last years: it is true that they were written to order and were in some respects perfunctory, but mastery is shown in the presentation of some remarkable new methods, and the musical speech is as beautiful as ever, even if the thoughts which that speech expresses seem to spring no longer from the heart.

This book should be read, if possible, with the scores of the quartets at hand. It is hoped, however, that the plentiful use of examples in music type will render its perusal easier and more intelligible. A good many of the scores are unfortunately not available in cheap form, but miniature copies of the six quartets dedicated to Haydn are procurable for about a shilling apiece in the Eulenberg Edition from Messrs. Goodwin & Tabb (Kammermusik, Nos. 1, 32, 33, 34, 35, and 8), and also those of the popular D major Quartet and the three final quartets (Kammermusik, Nos. 24, 25, 26, and 27). The only complete edition of the works discussed in this book is that published by Breitkopf & Härtel with the co-operation of Dr. Ludwig Köchel. The scores of all Mozart's string quartets are to be

Digitized by Google

found in Series 14 of this monumental collection. Mozart's compositions are so numerous that they can only be readily identified by what are always known as the Köchel numbers. These numbers are given throughout this book in connexion with each work mentioned, preceded by the letter K.

Lastly, the great value of the gramophone as an aid to the study of chamber music should not be overlooked. Several excellent performances of Mozart's finest string quartets have been successfully recorded. The author has taken pains to ascertain particulars of these, which will be found tabulated on another page.

T. F. D.

LONDON, 1926.

Digitized by Google

Gramophone Records of Mozart's String Quartets.

'*Columbia*' *Records.*

Record Nos.	*Work.*	*Players.*
L. 1606–8	Quartet in B flat (K. 458) (complete)	Léner String Quartet
L. 1520	Quartet in D minor (K. 421) (*Allegretto ma non troppo* only)	,,
D. 1427	Quartet in D minor (K. 421) (*Allegro moderato* and *Andante*)	London String Quartet
L. 1043–4	Quartet in E flat (K. 428) (all movements: some cuts probable)	,,
L. 1545–8	Quartet in C (K. 465) (complete)	Léner String Quartet
L. 1530	Quartet in G (K. 387) (*Andante cantabile* only)	,,

'*His Master's Voice*' *Records.*

DB. 249	Quartet in D (K. 575) (*Andante* only)	Flonzaley Quartet
DB. 254	Quartet in D (K. 575) (*Minuet* only)	,,
DB. 251	Quartet in D minor (K. 421) (*Finale* only)	,,
DA. 174	Quartet in D minor (K. 421) (*Minuet* only)	Elman String Quartet
DB. 238	Quartet in E flat (K. 428) (*Minuet* only)	,,
DB. 252	Quartet in G (K. 387) (*Finale* only)	Flonzaley Quartet

'*Vocalion*' *Records.*

K. 05190–3	Quartet in D minor (K. 421) (complete)	Kutcher String Quartet
D. 02013–4	Quartet in D (K. 575) (all movements: some cuts probable)	London String Quartet

Digitized by Google

I

The Early String Quartets

MOZART'S first string quartet (K. 80) (with the exception of a Rondo finale, added at some later time) was composed in 1770 at Lodi, during his first journey to Italy. The composer was then only fourteen years of age.

It begins with an Adagio in G major of considerable proportions, which is followed by a very short Allegro in the same key—a sonatina movement rather than a sonata movement—and a Minuet, also in G, with a Trio in C. The opening theme of the Adagio is exceedingly graceful, and already characteristically Mozartian in its turn of phrase.

Ex. 1.

No marked thematic originality is forthcoming, but there are some quite skilful points of elaboration, evidently accomplished with childish delight.

It is interesting to observe that the 2nd violin is treated with much freedom and independence, and is frequently employed to execute passages quite as enterprising as those allotted to the leader. The lower parts, especially that of the 'cello, are less confidently dealt with, and contrapuntal movement is generally confined to the two violins. The Rondo, alluded to above, is not only more decisive in style than the

Digitized by Google

foregoing movements, but far better balanced in form and more delicate in texture, which seems to point to its being the product of a considerably later period.

The three quartets called Divertimenti (K. 136–8), which are each in three movements and do not differ much in design from the other quartets of his earlier years, appear to come next in chronological order. They were composed in 1772 and are rhythmical and precise in manner, without, however, possessing any very striking features.

A little later, on his journey to Milan in October of the same year and during his sojourn there, Mozart busied himself with the writing of further string quartets. There are six in this group (K. 155–60), and all clearly belong to the same period. Each of these quartets comprises three movements only. They are not very rich in texture, nor can the ideas be accounted of any great significance. Nevertheless they are more contrapuntal and decorative than the early quartets of Haydn, and are not without melodic features of happy geniality. In the first of the set, in D (K. 155), for instance, we find a Finale which is founded on a theme of remarkable freshness and rustic charm :

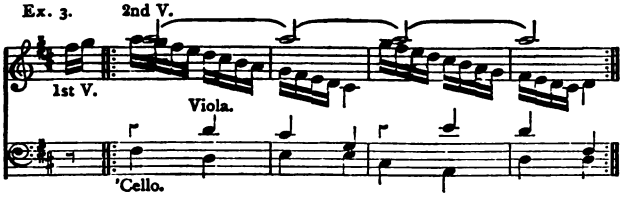
Ex. 2.

Unfortunately the promise of this opening is not quite fulfilled, for we have, in the course of the movement,

Digitized by Google

such passages of 'padding' as the following, which lead nowhere and are not interesting in themselves:

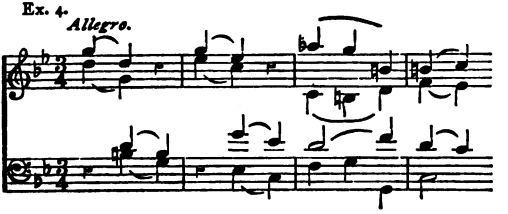
Ex. 3.



The second quartet of this set, in G (K. 156), opens with a light-hearted strain which sounds more like a Finale than a first movement, and after an expressive Adagio in E minor, finishes with a Minuet and Trio.

The third, in C (K. 157), is rather prim and formal throughout and presents little variety in its part-writing; the fourth, in F (K. 158), is even less eventful. Stronger thematic and rhythmic interest pervades the fifth of the group, in B flat (K. 159), particularly in an Allegro in G minor which follows the opening Andante. There are strange suggestions here of Mozart's later style, particularly in the episode beginning thus:

Ex. 4.



The final Rondo, however, is in the nature of a relapse into the square and obvious, and has some very dull 'manufactured' episodes.

In No. 6 of this set, in E flat (K. 160), Mozart

Digitized by Google

exhibits more originality and, as regards the first movement at least, is more economical with his thematic material, and sticks to his points with infinitely greater mastery and satisfaction. The Adagio and final Presto are less important: the former is graceful, but brief and not much developed, whilst in the latter he reverts to the use of mechanical passage-work such as that which disfigures the Finale of the first D major Quartet.

This group is, however, very instructive to the student, for the quartets are structurally of progressive interest and show that the composer's powers grew as he worked, in a remarkably steady way. The next batch of Mozart's string quartets, which can again conveniently be gathered into a cluster of six (K. 168–73), appear to have been composed in quick succession during August and September 1773. Jahn tells us that they were written in Vienna, the birth-place and domain of Haydn's chamber music, and one can imagine how, as he points out, 'the ambitious youth would exert himself to satisfy the demand for the highest class of compositions' in this great musical centre. It is interesting to note that these Vienna quartets remained unpublished for fifteen years, when, after the composer had achieved wide fame, they were brought out as 'Six Quartets by Mozart, at a low price', with no hint of the period at which they were composed. This led to some kind of protest from the publisher of the later quartets, who evidently regarded his business rival's methods as on a par with his prices.

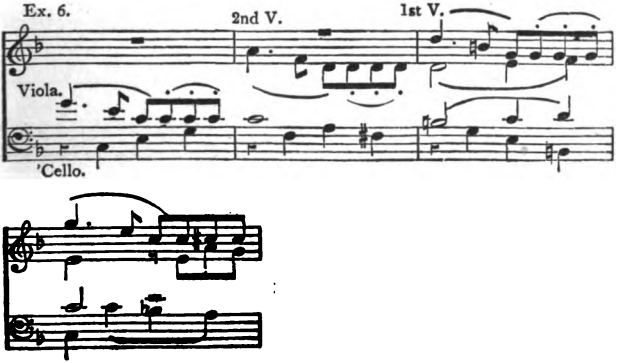
These quartets are certainly works of larger scope than the previous six, and, while they do not as yet exhibit the complete grace or rare beauty of form

Digitized by Google

which we associate with the fully-fledged Mozart, they attempt far more in the matter of logical thematic development. Moreover the composer's inventive powers had already ripened to the extent that he was able almost entirely to dispense with passages of 'padding' and mere note-manufacture to fill up time and space. Each of the quartets has four movements.

The opening Allegro of the first of this set, in F (K. 168), may be quoted as an early example of a method of development which became very prominent in Mozart's later work:

The third bar of this initial theme is singled out for embellishment in the 13th bar, and when the 'working-out' section arrives it is this figure, not the whole theme, which comes forward for discussion:



Digitized by Google

This is an early instance of a type of workmanship which Beethoven adopted with such success and which became traditional in sonata construction. Indeed, the episodical utilization of figures derived from fragments of the main theme is a device often described as a special innovation of Beethoven.

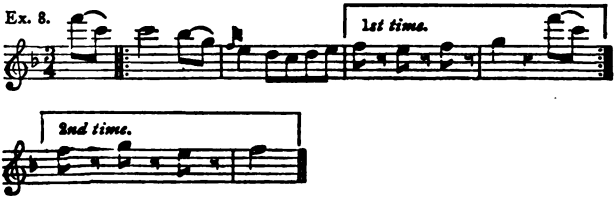
The Andante shows, perhaps for the first time in Mozart's chamber music, a real mastery of contrapuntal methods, and, incidentally, the use of mutes. The treatment of the opening phrase is in the manner of a canon :

Ex. 7.

The four parts throughout are equally interesting and important.

The Minuet is a slight but charming miniature, and discloses a dainty theme :

Ex. 8.



In the Trio, which is in the key of B flat major, there is some effective imitative writing in which all the

Digitized by Google

instruments participate, as in the Andante quoted in Ex. 7.

The Finale takes the form of a strictly organized Fugue on the following lively subject:

Ex. 9.

Here we find the young composer rejoicing in his newly-found skill to construct such ingenious and effective *stretti* as the following:

Ex. 10.

and a similarly playful treatment of the theme inverted, a few bars later.

There is nothing quite so unconstrained or vivacious as this in any of the preceding quartets, but the style is a trifle monotonous and there is little in the nature of contrast, which is such a valuable device in quartet music.

In the Quartet in A (K. 169), the next of this set,

Digitized by Google

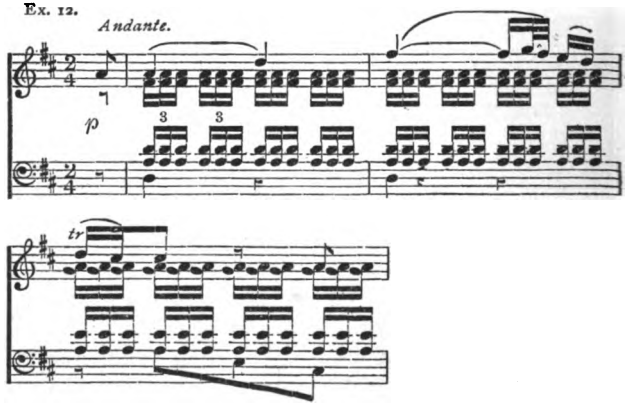
there are again some constructive features worthy of attention. In the first movement the rhythm of the concluding phrases of the 'exposition'

Ex. 11.

is seized upon after the double bar, and the brief development section is chiefly concerned with a contrapuntal discussion of this rhythm. This plan of turning what seems to be a mere chance remark in the codetta into a main topic of conversation became a very favourite method of treatment with Mozart in after years.

An Andante in D major, in the nature of a cavatina, follows. This is noteworthy for suave melody and the free use of double notes in the accompaniment:

Ex. 12.



In the Minuet the delicate grace of the broken phrases

Digitized by Google

which form the opening (singularly suggestive of 'God save the King', both in melody and harmony)

Ex. 13.

seems to promise something more interesting than that which actually ensues. The Finale is called a 'Rondeau', the subject of which hops out before us in a very amusing way:

Ex. 14.

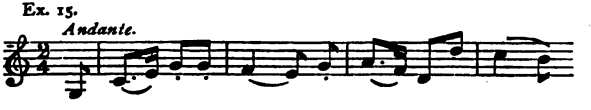
Allegro.

but, like most of Mozart's early Finales, it does not contain much music that calls for special comment.

The third quartet of this group (K. 170) is in C major and begins with a set of variations. It is the first of Mozart's quartets in which variations occur. The theme is somewhat reminiscent of Haydn, and begins thus:

Ex. 15.

Andante.



The variations are of the old-fashioned decorative kind, that is to say they are variations which simply 'vary' and do not expatiate upon the text provided

Digitized by Google

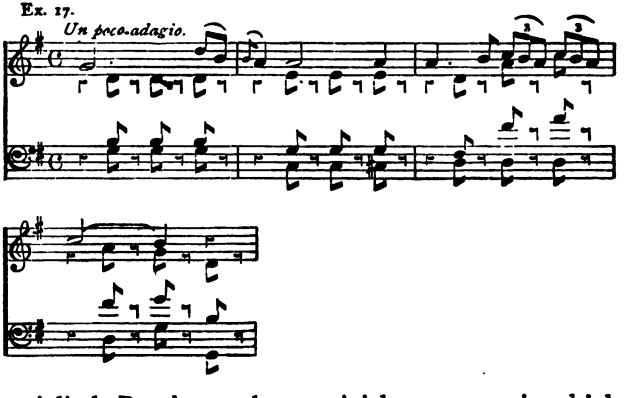
by the theme. The most inventive is the last, where the quiet phrases of the melody are humorously interrupted by loud rumbling ejaculations, *tutti*, in demi-semiquavers :

Ex. 16.

After this the theme is repeated, unadorned.

A Minuet and Trio, of no special moment, is succeeded by a slow movement, in G, which consists mainly of a series of melodic solo passages for 1st violin, viola, and 2nd violin in turn, simply accompanied by chords of detached quavers. Again one is reminded of Haydn.

Ex. 17.



A little Rondo, an almost trivial movement in which there is a great deal of repetition of figures of very slight importance, and little attempt to weld the ideas into a continuous whole, completes the quartet, which is perhaps rather less interesting than its companions.

Digitized by Google

The fourth quartet of the set, in E flat (K. 171), displays more invention and originality. There is a short introductory Adagio, opening with a significant unison phrase, which has a graceful corollary to round it off :

Ex. 18.

The Allegro, to which this dignified opening leads us, possesses real Mozartian charm and delicacy of fancy, as the following few bars of the main subject will show :

Ex. 19.

The easy progress of the music is only disturbed by the sudden return of the Adagio (a fine unexpected touch), which concludes the movement.

The Minuet of this quartet is remarkable in having a theme consisting of two sections of 5-bar rhythm, but the melodic interest here is not very great. An exceedingly contrapuntal, almost Bach-like, Andante

Digitized by Google

follows, and the Finale, an *Allegro assai* in sonata form, is naïve and humorous in its main subject,

Ex. 20.

and even more delightfully merry in its chirping second theme :

Ex. 21.

It is a pleasant movement all through, and may perhaps convey to the fancifully minded a suggestion of

> birds in the boughis sheen,
> Singing of love among the leavës small.

The fifth quartet, in B flat (K. 172), opens in the following business-like and serviceable way—not free from convention, but also not devoid of charm of phrase :

Digitized by Google

Ex. 22.

Allegro spiritoso.

The 2nd subject is a charming melody of a somewhat Tyrolean cast (it may be remembered that Mozart was born in the Austrian Tyrol, and even in a work as mature as the Clarinet Quintet the influence of Tyrolean folk-melodies comes peeping out). Following the lead of Haydn in many of his quartets he sets the melody to be played by the 1st and 2nd violins in octaves :

Ex. 23.

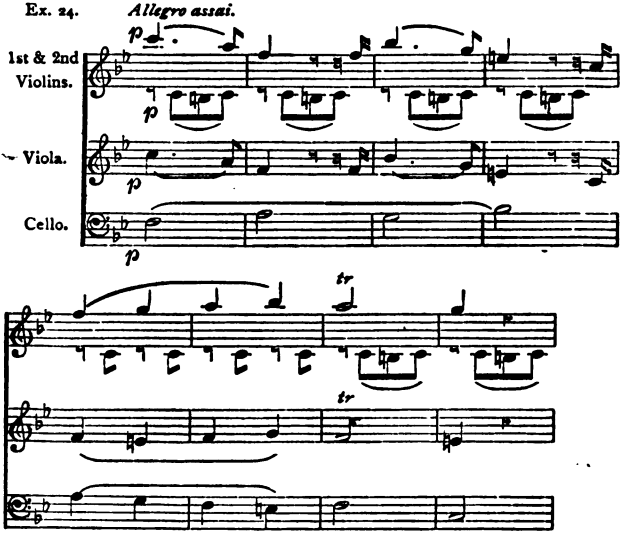
Upon these two themes the whole of the brief movement depends, and it never departs from the mood of formal elegance which both these subjects express. For the Adagio Mozart provides an expres-

Digitized by Google

sive solo melody for the 1st violin. It is accompanied by constantly moving semiquavers, ingeniously dovetailed by the 2nd violin and viola, and the 'cello supplies a simple succession of detached basses. The Minuet is unusually contrapuntal in style for the period, but there is relief in the gentle little Trio which, with its simple detached notes and obvious rhythm, is the most innocent thing in the world.

The Finale has a little more texture than Mozart's Finales at this stage of his progress were wont to exhibit, and possesses a 2nd subject which is charmingly distributed between the instruments:

Ex. 24. *Allegro assai.*



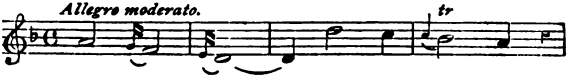
It is in first-movement form, but the development section is very short and unpretentious.

The last quartet of this group, No. 6 in D minor

Digitized by Google

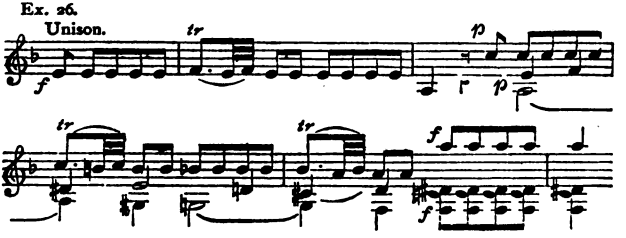
(K. 173), opens with a movement which has some noteworthy touches of fun. It begins seriously enough:

Ex. 25.



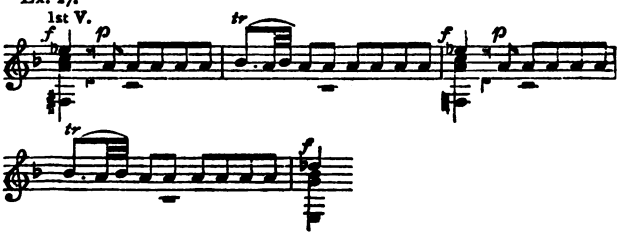
but on arriving, after only 16 bars, at the 2nd subject Mozart shows us that he is much more interested in what he has to say here. The quaint melody seems almost to be suggested by the sounds which emanate from a poultry run! Surely this is the clucking of many hens in different keys?

Ex. 26.



And so it proceeds for quite a long time. After the double bar, with still greater humour, Mozart, instead of elaborating what has gone before, simplifies. Our attention is claimed by a solo hen, who begins like this and goes on cheerfully chuckling to herself for a great many bars:

Ex. 27.



Digitized by Google

It is all very amusing, and quite the best farm-yard music that has ever been composed!

A graceful Andante in D major (a somewhat unusual sequence of keys), a Minuet, as formal and stately as usual, follow, and the Finale takes the shape of a strict Fugue on a very serious chromatic subject:

This is not a theme which lends itself to much variety of treatment, but the composer succeeds, by dwelling with a good deal of persistency upon the figure of the last two beats of the third bar, in getting plenty of animation and diatonic movement into the piece. He does not miss the chances of chromatic effects, which are particularly telling in the *stretti*. But nothing he has to say in these last three movements can quite drive away the smiles excited by the first movement. We cannot forget the poultry, or our curiosity to know how Mozart was inspired to conceive such a thoroughly irresponsible and comic piece of tone-painting.

II

The Six String Quartets dedicated to Haydn

In these quartets we find Mozart's art at its ripest. After he had completed the quartets already dealt with the composer did not turn his attention to this form of writing for something like nine years. It was in 1782 that he began the sequence of six great works which must always be ranked amongst his most famous masterpieces.

Digitized by Google

The quartets may be tabulated as follows :

No. 1 in G major (K. 387), dated 31 December 1782.
No. 2 in D minor (K. 421), dated June 1783.
No. 3 in E flat major (K. 428), belonging also to 1783.

After this there was a pause in the creation of quartets, which was broken by the composition of

No. 4 in B flat major (K. 458), dated 9 November 1784,

followed by

No. 5 in A major (K. 464) and
No. 6 in C major (K. 465),

both of which were composed in January 1785.

The six quartets were published during the autumn of 1785 with a graceful dedication to Haydn, in which the composer declares that they are the fruit of long and earnest application.

These works were not received with complete approbation by the critics of the day. Even one of the most favourable expresses the opinion that ' it is a pity that in his truly artistic and beautiful compositions Mozart should carry his effort after originality too far, to the detriment of the sentiment and heart of his works. His new quartets, dedicated to Haydn, are much too highly spiced to be palatable for any length of time.' The chief bone of contention was apparently the opening of the sixth quartet, as we shall see later. In any case these severe comments are strange reading for the present generation. Mozart had passed the experimental stage. He had formed a style which must have been familiar to the whole world of music. His mastery could not be questioned. In these quartets each part has equal importance in the scheme, and the instruments are handled with an ease and

Digitized by Google

freedom which no other composer of quartets ever achieved in quite the same degree.

Let us first examine in detail the opening four bars of No. 1 in G major, for they will reveal to us, in short space, that unerring perfection of musical texture which is, perhaps, analogous to what painters call 'quality'.

Ex. 29. *Allegro vivace assai.*

This is flawless quartet writing. We can think of no other medium which could deliver the message as it is here delivered. It is not a harmonized melody: the thought itself is a four-part thought. And immediately

Digitized by Google

it is expressed Mozart shows us that complete unity of action is not the only virtue his delicate machinery possesses. He has personalities to deal with—they can converse as well as blend their tones. The viola has something to say—the 2nd violin can respond by repeating the same notes with its own characteristic voice. It is left for the 1st violin to carry the phrase aloft and round it into a perfect whole.

Ex. 30.

There is, unfortunately, no space here to carry such detailed analysis further. It must suffice to say that these eight bars are quoted in score to give a clear

Digitized by Google

sample of the quality of Mozart's workmanship and line-work throughout the movement. This subject-matter is spun with the greatest ease into successions of florid melodic figures, which are only interrupted by the appearance of an engaging 2nd subject, given out, in the first instance, by the 2nd violin:

Ex. 31.

This tune, in turn, is subjected to decorative treatment, culminating in a crisp concluding figure:

Ex. 32.

The development section is brimful of the happiest ingenuities, the beauties of which can only be relished by a close study of the score. First the utmost value is extracted from the opening theme, discussed in different keys by the three upper instruments in turn; afterwards the last two bars of Ex. 31, as well as the delicate rhythms of Ex. 32, are a fruitful source of inspiration to the composer.

The writing, elaborate as it is, is always crystal-clear, but so much is made of every detail that there seems nothing left for the recapitulation section to undertake other than simple restatement. Mozart shows his wisdom in giving the listener exactly what his ears desire—a plain repetition which differs only

Digitized by Google

from the exposition in the necessary transposition of the 2nd subject into G major. There is no Coda.

The Minuet comes next. It is a most interesting example. Indeed Mozart offers us here an entirely unconventional view of this measure. There is nothing quite on a par with it, even in Beethoven, for expansive originality of structure. In the first two bars we are given a hint of the formal lilt. But, as Mr. H. C. Colles points out in his *Growth of Music*,[1] this is done 'of set purpose, to act as a foil to the strangely accented chromatic passages which follow on the first violin copied in contrary motion by the violoncello'. 'The charm lies', he adds, 'in first setting a familiar pattern, then wiping it out, and finally establishing it at the cadence,' as will be shown in the following example:

Ex. 33.

An examination of the complete score will reveal, also, that the form of the movement is far more developed

[1] H. C. Colles, *The Growth of Music*, vol. ii, Chap. IV, Oxford University Press.

Digitized by Google

than usual. It is akin to that of a regular sonata movement with 2nd subject,

Ex. 34.

working-out, and recapitulation of both themes complete.

The Trio (in G minor) is shorter, and in the customary pattern, with a vigorous uprising initial theme,

Ex. 35.

in marked contrast with everything which has preceded it.

The beautifully wrought *Andante cantabile* in C major, which forms the third movement, has also an ascending arpeggio theme, but it is of a very different character :

Ex. 36.

Andante cantabile.

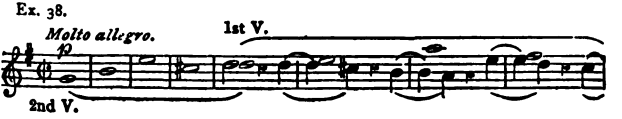
The mood is almost entirely contemplative, but the score is full of expressive turns of phrase and rich passages of musical embroidery. It is not a movement which lends itself readily to textual quotation. The following brief extract from one of its episodes must serve as a fair example of the exquisite phraseology which Mozart so lovingly controls :

Digitized by Google

Ex. 37.

The construction of the Finale is most unusual and most successful. The movement opens with a fugal exposition on a semibreve subject which reminds one in shape of the famous semibreve theme in the Finale of the 'Jupiter' Symphony. Here is the subject, with its answer and the counter-subject:

Ex. 38.



Digitized by Google

After the 'cello and viola have entered in turn, in regular fugal method, the music suddenly abandons its severity and breaks off into a tripping dance-tune, the setting of which is the very reverse of contrapuntal:

Ex. 39.
1st V.

This is repeated, the 2nd violin becoming the soloist, after which the viola and 'cello re-echo the tail end of the phrase, which is then continued contrapuntally. A chromatic passage, supported by an inner 'pedal' note (a repeated A on the viola), leads to a chord of A major and the arrival of the 2nd subject. This subject is similarly divided into two sections, the first part fugal in exactly the same way as with the principal theme, but beginning this time on the 'cello:

Ex. 40.
f
Viola.
'Cello.

Digitized by Google

Into the continuation of this the semibreve subject (Ex. 38) is most deftly interwoven, after which we have a solo section exactly corresponding in importance to the dance measure of Ex. 39, accompanied with simple chords and chord-figures :

A variation of this and a short codetta (all in the same graceful strain) conclude the first part of the movement. The development section opens with yet another melodic figure, a little chromatic scale-phrase

which is treated in counterpoint for 18 bars. The 1st subject (Ex. 38) then reappears, traversing an interesting series of remote keys. The recapitulation has no definite starting-point—a device which Beethoven is generally supposed to have invented—but when the dance-tune (Ex. 39) enters, transposed exactly into C major, we are conscious that the development is over. The second theme (Ex. 40) takes its customary place in the *reprise*, in the customary tonic key, and the solo section (Ex. 41) is again requisitioned (also in G major) and leads to a short Coda, in which the chromatic phrases of Ex. 42, and a *stretto* of Ex. 38, are prominent features.

The second quartet of this series, in D minor (K. 421), is one of the undisputed masterpieces of quartet literature. Its moods and colouring differ

Digitized by Google

widely from those of the work just under discussion. All four movements are serious in character, and perhaps in only one other chamber work, the famous Quintet for strings in G minor, does Mozart ascend to quite the same level of sustained emotional beauty as he reaches here. In the case of the quintet the Finale, charming though it is, is invaded by a touch of irresponsibility which somehow seems to break the spell. This quartet, on the contrary, is all of a piece in its unity of style, as we shall see.

The first movement is singularly concise and economical in thematic material. According to Jahn, it is an 'affecting expression of melancholy'. The fine opening theme is certainly darkly serious, but it is not gloomy, for its solemnity is tempered with grace :

Ex. 43.

Nevertheless these are bold outlines, which are accentuated by the repetition an octave higher, with altered

Digitized by Google

harmonies and a full close. The continuation sustains the brave freedom and the grace, as well as the firm D minor key-sense.

Ex. 44.

The closing semiquaver figure is echoed by the three companion instruments in turn, culminating in a forceful dominant seventh chord in F major in its first inversion. Though we have, thus early, reached the key of the 2nd subject, we are kept waiting for it for some ten bars of imitative writing, dealing fancifully with relevant phrases. A full close brings us to the mood the composer wishes to establish—a mood of singular serenity and ingratiating charm :

Ex. 45.

This lovely theme is followed by a decorative variant, with triplet semiquavers, and a pointedly rhythmical cadential phrase :

Ex. 46.

The number of full closes in F major is surprising (there

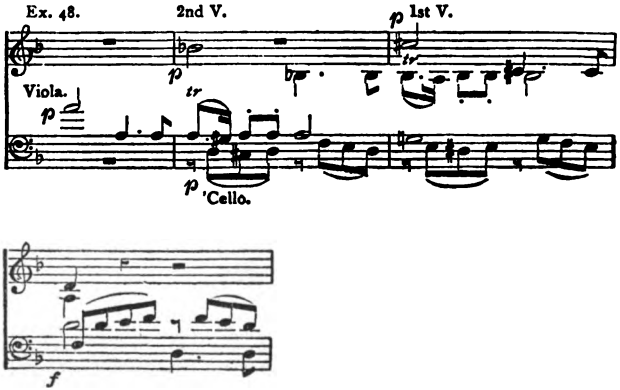
Digitized by Google

are seven in all), but it is still more surprising that they never become tiresome. Just before the double-bar two little codetta figures, which might escape attention, should be noted, for they assume importance in the development :

Ex. 47.

For the working-out section, as might be expected, Mozart seizes upon the 1st subject, which, with its octave dip, is obviously fixed in the listener's mind, and therefore a fit topic for discussion. He starts off in the key of E flat major, with the *motif* of the first two bars of Ex. 43, reminding one of some of Beethoven's bold strokes in like situations. At first his treatment of the 2nd bar of this subject is somewhat persistent, but, after a striking enharmonic modulation to A minor, he deals with the whole phrase in a series of dissonant imitations, starting thus :

Ex. 48.



Digitized by Google

A little later considerable play is made with a variant of the phrase of the 3rd bar of the 1st subject, and here it is that the figure of the codetta (Ex. 47) comes into prominence, and is tossed about from instrument to instrument in playful sport. Thus we are led to the recapitulation, which pursues a fairly normal course. There are, however, a few transformations. For instance, the 2nd subject is heard in D minor, and its decorative variant (Ex. 46) is slightly altered in notes and given fresh rhythmic energy, after the following fashion :

Ex. 49.

There is a Coda of six bars only, for the days of long perorations had not yet arrived.

The second movement is a serene piece of expression, called by Jahn a ' consolatory ' Andante ' of a melancholy quartet ', clear in purpose, concise and very perfect in formation. The first half, consisting of two repeated sections beginning and ending in F major, is balanced by a middle section with the tonality alternating between F minor and A flat major. The first few bars of the principal melody establish the mood.

Ex. 50.

A good deal of attention is paid to the semiquaver figures which begin at the end of the second bar,

Digitized by Google

figures which are utilized in both portions of the movement. Jahn alludes to the 'ardent longing' which they express, and the description will serve. The broken phrases of the F minor section maintain the sad but serene mood of the movement:

Ex. 51.

After this theme has run its course a return is made to the whole of the first section (unaltered), and there is a short Coda, dealing mainly with the rising semiquavers of the opening melody.

The Minuet reverts to the earnestness of the first movement, and is as far removed from the cheery Minuets of Haydn as from the capricious and epigrammatic Scherzi of Beethoven. Let us note the construction of the 10-bar melody, its sequential balance, and the unity of its rhythmical design:

Ex. 52.

Allegretto.

After this double-bar there is more of the same rhythm, and an extension of the sequences, with a lovely use of chromatic melody and harmony. The Trio is in sharp contrast, with its continuous snap-rhythm solo melody in D major, accompanied by the

Digitized by Google

simplest tonic and dominant harmonies played *pizzicato* by the under strings.

Ex. 53.

Simplicity of design is here combined with great freedom in the use of wide melodic intervals.

Ex. 54.

In the final eight bars the viola joins the 1st violin in the lower octave, but the *pizzicato* chords are continued without interruption by the 2nd violin and 'cello. It is interesting to note that Mozart's use of *pizzicato* effects in his chamber music is extremely rare; this is, indeed, the only important passage of the kind to be found in any of the string quartets. Its very isolation gives it a specially marked prominence and glitter amongst such solemn surroundings.

The Finale (in D minor) takes the form of a set of variations on a theme, in $\frac{6}{8}$ time, which is of the rhythmic nature of a *Siciliano*, beginning thus:

Ex. 55. *Allegretto, ma non troppo.*

There are four variations, followed by a return to the theme, slightly altered and extended by way of Coda.

Digitized by Google

The first variation is mostly concerned with elaborations in the 1st violin part. The second variation deals principally with bold cross-rhythms,

Ex. 56.

alternating with busy semiquaver triplet-figures. In the third variation prominence is accorded to the viola line, which is treated with most enterprising freedom and fluency, as the following short extract will show :

Ex. 57.

Var. 4 is in D major, like a sudden burst of sunshine on a quiet landscape. The final section (D minor again) is taken *più allegro* : the repeated semiquavers of the 1st violin in the 2nd and 3rd bars of the theme come into prominence once more, this time as triplets :

Ex. 58.

Digitized by Google

and great play is made with this graceful bird-like chirping right up to the closing bars of the quartet.

The third quartet of the group, in E flat (K. 428), is rich in the possession of many and varied beauties. It is less uniformly solemn than the D minor. For two movements, at least, it touches an unaccustomed note of quiet sadness and almost ethereal tranquillity, whilst the Finale transports us to fairyland. If the falling octave in a minor key expresses melancholy, the rising octave in the major betokens hope. The subject of the opening *Allegro ma non troppo* is in unison for all the instruments:

Ex. 59.

and this is followed by the soft interplay of significant phrases from the 1st and 2nd violins, still a little hushed and wrapped in mystery:

Ex. 60.

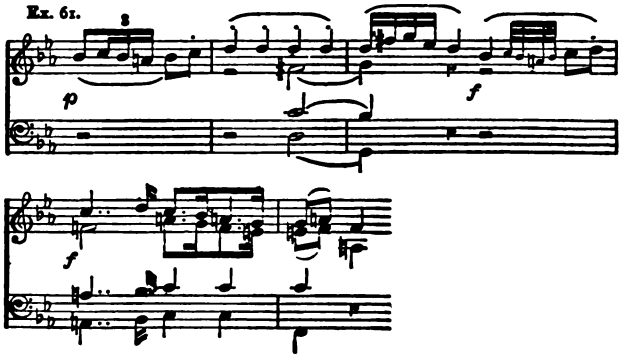
The 2nd subject, when it arrives, has definite melodic continuity, but hovers, undecided, between the keys of G minor and B flat major (Ex. 61).

The melody is subjected to repetition with the viola as spokesman. Its expansion is brief. After the double-bar we have a version in canon of the 1st subject, which is not, however, further developed. Practically

Digitized by Google

the whole of this section is concerned with a chain of figures derived from the opening half-bar of Ex. 61—

Ex. 61.



a phrase which the key of E flat seems to render familiar, for is not its counterpart a prominent characteristic of Beethoven's 'Emperor' Concerto? These figures are bound together by repeated notes and sweeping arpeggio passages in triplets,

Ex. 62.

which recur in various keys, and on every instrument in turn. The recapitulation is quite normal, and there is no Coda.

At the opening of the Andante Mozart seems to be engrossed in what is commonly called a 'brown study'. It is a mood most unusual with him. If we look at the first six bars we shall see that this is not by any means melody in the ordinary accepted sense. The 'cello wanders quietly amongst its middle notes

Digitized by Google

in grave meditation—the upper parts, with their syncopations and dark low tone, are purely harmonic :

Ex. 63.

These calm reflections are not disturbed by what follows, and though the notes are transferred to higher octaves the same meditative mood prevails. Still later we have drifted into what seems like a dim dream of half-recollected sorrows,

Ex. 64.

with a responsive echo, strangely mystic in expression, and still more strangely anticipative of the opening

Digitized by Google

theme of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* (a coincidence already noted by Stanford in his *Musical Composition*):

Ex. 65.

The movement is in sonata form, and in the brief development section the roaming 'cello quaver-shapes of Ex. 63 are transferred to the upper voices, whilst the accompanying syncopations become more and more chromatic, with growing poignancy of expression. We are thus led to a return of the first section without any awakening from our dreams. Even Mozart, most spiritual-minded of musicians, never conceived a more unearthly, a more truly religious piece of music than this, where four gently blended voices seem, as it were from a distance, to speak 'authentic tidings of invisible things'.

We are brought into our own world again with a jerk, by the forceful opening of the Minuet—almost the only strongly rhythmical bars in the whole quartet:

Ex. 66.

Digitized by Google

This is breezy, vital music, relieved with touches of pure rusticity such as the following, over a sustained B flat harmony,

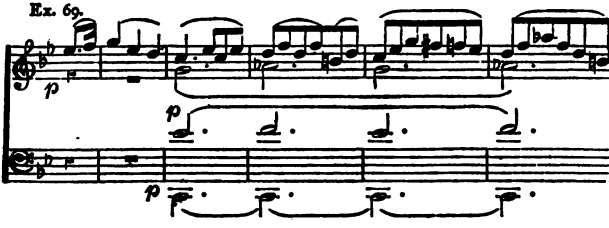
Ex. 67.

as well as by a dainty passage of detached chords which suggests the sudden appearance of wood-nymphs upon the scene :

Ex. 68.

The Trio is mainly in B flat major, but begins above a low pedal C of the 'cello in the following delightful way :

Ex. 69.



It is noteworthy for its further succession of pedal-basses, on B flat, G, F, and B flat in turn, and for the continuity of its wavy quaver phrases.

The Finale is a Rondo, and its dainty dance-like

Digitized by Google

subject suggests that the wood-nymphs, who certainly arrived during the progress of the Minuet, are staying with us to trip a measure for our delight:

Ex. 70.

In these broken phrases and in scampering semiquavers the general liveliness is continued throughout a long subject and a modulating episode. The next definite tune, when it comes, is a little more wistful in style, though it by no means contradicts the animated manner of the rest. A resemblance to Ex. 61 seems to connect the 2nd bar of the melody with some prominent episodes in the first movement, but it is probably an unconscious connexion.

Ex. 71.

Digitized by Google

Upon these two themes and their tributaries the whole of this very light movement is based. The Coda is irresistibly charming and ends with a suggestion of the final disappearance of the nymphs, in a passage which is worthy of Mendelssohn's fairy music at its best.

Ex. 72.

This is a bewitching ending to a work which perhaps suffers, as a whole, from excess of variety, for it covers almost too diverse a field of musical experience in the course of its four movements.

Digitized by Google

PRINTED IN ENGLAND
AT THE OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
BY JOHN JOHNSON
PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY

Digitized by Google